What is claimed is:

1. A method for identifying documents in a database which relate to a document under test, comprising:

retrieving the document under test from the database;

storing as generation 1 data identifying data corresponding to each reference cited in the document under test;

retrieving from the database each available reference identified by the identifying data stored as generation 1 data; and

storing as generation 2 data identifying data corresponding to each reference cited in the references identified by the generation 1 data.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving from a user an identification of the document under test.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising applying rule-based filtering to the stored identifying data.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the stored identifying data to the user.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the document under test is a patent.

6. A method for identifying documents in a database which relate to a document under test, comprising:

retrieving from the database a list of documents that cite the document under test;

storing as generation 1 data identifying data corresponding to each reference in the list;

46

retrieving from the database each available reference identified by the identifying data stored as generation 1 data; and

storing as generation 2 data identifying data corresponding to each reference cited in the references identified by the generation 1 data.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising receiving from a user an identification of the document under test.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising applying rule-based filtering to the stored identifying data.

9. The method of claim 6, further comprising displaying the stored identifying data to the user.

10. The method of claim 6, wherein the document under test is a patent.

11. A method for identifying documents in a database which relate to a document under test, comprising:

retrieving from the database a list of documents that cite the document under test;

storing as generation 1 data identifying data corresponding to each document in the list;

retrieving from the database a list of documents that cite each document identified by the identifying data stored as generation 1 data; and

storing as generation 2 data identifying data corresponding to each document in the list of documents that cite each document identified in the generation 1 data.

47

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising receiving from a user an identification of the document under test.

13. The method of claim 11, further comprising applying rule-based filtering to the stored identifying data.

5

14. The method of claim 11, further comprising displaying the stored identifying data to the user.

10

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the document under test is a patent.

48